

Coronavirus Update

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Mass.gov

COVID-19 Essential Services FAQs

Updated: Tuesday, April 7, 2020

Please find a list of FAQs below which address many of the submissions received by EOHED relating to “[COVID-19 Essential Services \(/info-details/covid-19-essential-services\)](#)” guidance associated with Governor Baker’s March 23, 2020 Emergency Order (which was updated and extended on March 31, 2020).

PLEASE NOTE: This page will be updated based on the update and extension of the essential services executive order on March 31. [Please click here \(/info-details/covid-19-essential-services\)](#) to read the most up-to-date essential services list.

All submissions through the Essential Service Designation Request [form \(/forms/essential-service-designation-request\)](#) are actively reviewed by EOHED staff.

If a business qualifies as essential, the business should continue to operate and perform their essential service.

As always, we urge businesses to follow social distancing protocols for workers and customers in accordance with guidance from the Department of Public Health.

Further guidance will be provided on a rolling basis through this FAQ page which will be updated regularly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[General Questions - Essential Services Related \(#general-questions---essential-services-related-\)](#)

[Health Care/Public Health/Human Services \(#health-care/public-health/human-services-\)](#)

[Law Enforcement, Public Safety, First Responders \(#law-enforcement,-public-safety,-first-responders-\)](#)

[Food and Agriculture \(#food-and-agriculture-\)](#)

[Energy \(#energy-\)](#)

Water and Wastewater (#water-and-wastewater-)

Transportation and Logistics (#transportation-and-logistics-)

Communications and Information Technology (#communications-and-information-technology-)

Other Community-Based Essential Functions and Government Operations

(#other-community-based-essential-functions-and-government-operations-)

Critical Manufacturing (#critical-manufacturing-)

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General Questions - Essential Services Related

- If my business or organization is defined as providing “COVID-19 Essential Services,” do I need a physical designation or certificate to continue my brick-and-mortar operations? **NO. If covered, a business does not need to take any action or receive an essential service designation, or certificate.**
- If my employer provides essential services and I am reporting to work, do I need to provide or carry with me any sort of documentation? **NO**
- If my city has deemed me non-essential, but the Governor has deemed me essential (or vice versa) should I stay open?
 - If your business provides an essential service, you are not required to stay open, but you may. If the Governor has deemed your business essential, your city or town is prohibited from deeming your business non-essential and preventing you from remaining open if you are complying with the Governor’s order.
- If my business is non-essential, can I go to my place of business to perform routine maintenance on the facility, attend to perishable products or property, or perform other necessary tasks?
 - If you are the owner of a non-essential business, you may go to your business facility as needed to take care of crucial tasks that cannot be done remotely or to retrieve necessary materials or documents. Your employees may not go to your bricks-and-mortar place
- If I work outside and can socially distance, can I keep running my business even if it isn’t essential? **YES in some circumstances (see below).**
 - If the service a business provides is not on the essential services list, that business must cease all in-person activities at its bricks-and-mortar facilities. These non-essential businesses are encouraged to work remotely. Businesses that do work remotely, whether as part of their normal activities or as a result of this order, must maintain social distancing requirements: six feet of separation between all employees, and between employees and members of the public.
- What should I do if it is unclear if my business is essential, or if I have submitted a request for my industry to be added to the essential services list?

- If a business, organization, or facility is unsure about whether or not it is considered “non-essential” it should:
 - First, carefully review the Order, the essential services list and the posted FAQ to confirm that the business, organization, or facility is not addressed in some way.
 - Second, if “non-essential” status is still unclear, make a good faith determination about whether it is “non-essential”, based on: i. the Order’s purpose, which is to “minimize all unnecessary activities outside of the home during the state of emergency”; and ii. how similar businesses, organizations, and facilities are treated under the Order.
 - Third, if the business, organization, or facility decides to remain open pending more detailed legal advice, strictly adhere to all applicable guidance from the CDC and DPH regarding social distancing and environmental cleaning and disinfection.
- Can non-essential businesses stay open if they shift to exclusively curbside pick up? **NO**
- What government services are still available (register of deeds, probate issues etc.)?
 - Consistent with the essential services list, state and local government can determine which of their government workers (and therefore services) are critical. Please consult www.mass.gov (/) and your city or town hall for information about specific services
 - The essential services order does not apply to the courts; information on which court services are available can be found [here](https://www.mass.gov/guides/court-system-response-to-covid-19) (/guides/court-system-response-to-covid-19)
- Are suppliers and persons in supply chains for essential businesses allowed to stay open? **YES if they are supplying a core product relevant to the COVID-19 response.**
- Can employees of non-essential businesses still come in to do non-essential work? **NO**
- Am I allowed to report a non-essential business not closed to my local board of health? **YES**
- I am an essential company with more than 10 employees. How do we comply with best practices? **You are allowed to operate while maintaining social distancing measures**
 - See [CDC guidance for businesses](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html?deliveryName=USCDC_10_4-DM24118) (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html?deliveryName=USCDC_10_4-DM24118).
- What are the rights of employees who believe they are working under unsafe conditions or are not essential and are being told to come into work? [Contact](mailto:safepublicworkplacemailbox@mass.gov) (<mailto:safepublicworkplacemailbox@mass.gov>) **the Division of Labor Standards.**

Health Care/Public Health/Human Services

- Are chiropractors considered essential? **YES**
- Are massage therapists considered essential? **NO**
- Do medical device distributors and third party production of said products count as an essential service? **YES**
- Am I still allowed to see my therapist? **YES, although you should contact your provider about telehealth options.**
- Am I still allowed to see a physical therapist in person? **YES**

- Are furniture stores considered part of essential shelter services? **NO**
- Does a CBD retailer fall under medical marijuana? **NO**
- I work at a residential home for students. Am I essential? **YES**
- Should home health agencies stay operational? **YES**
- Can medical researchers still go to their workplaces to care for animals that are part of the research? **YES**
- Are bio-pharmaceutical research and development activities essential? **YES**
- Are embroidery/fabric makers for medical personnel and first responders considered essential? **YES**

Law Enforcement, Public Safety, First Responders

- Are car washes essential? **NO**
- What about car wash establishments that assist with the cleaning of public safety vehicles? Are they essential?
NO
- Are security officers at office buildings deemed essential? **YES**

Food and Agriculture

- Are breweries and beer distribution covered under food/beverage? **YES**
- Do third party delivery services (Door Dash, Grubhub) count as essential services? **YES**
- Are nurseries essential? **Yes, if they sell food or food plants and follow [DPH guidance \(/doc/dph-nurseries-guidance\)](/doc/dph-nurseries-guidance).**

Energy

- Are manufacturers or distributors of equipment and parts used by the various energy sectors covered as essential? **YES**
- Are solar projects/installments still allowed to operate? **YES**
- Is the construction and development of electric generation, including residential solar, considered essential? **YES**
- Is HVAC an essential service? **YES**
- Why isn't heating oil considered an essential service? **Heating oil is a petroleum product and therefore included in essential services related to petroleum.**

Water and Wastewater

To come

Transportation and Logistics

- Are rideshare operators included in essential workers? **YES**
- Are rental car companies deemed essential? **YES**
- Are towing services and vehicle repair services deemed essential? **YES**
- Does auto body fall under auto repair designation? **YES**
- Can a car dealership close its showroom, but keep its service department/garage open? **YES**
- Are marine mechanics essential? **YES**
- Can bike shops be open? **YES if providing bicycle repair services**

Communications and Information Technology

- Are independent IT workers/contractors still allowed to operate? **YES**
 - See Information Technology section of list for specifics
- Are printing services considered an essential communication function? **YES if media**
- My company does direct mail services and shipping, are we an essential service? **YES**

Other Community-Based Essential Functions and Government Operations

- Are fitness centers or recreational facilities allowed to operate? **NO**
- Child care facilities are closed except for emergency child care operators, but can I still use my in-home nanny or babysitter? **YES**
- Are veterinary services and kennels and day pet care facilities essential? **YES**
- Is pet grooming essential? **NO**
- Storage Facilities? **YES**
- What real estate brokerage services are considered essential? **SEE SPECIFICS BELOW**
 - Residential and commercial real estate services, including settlement services, are essential
 - Open houses: While open houses are not prohibited, they are subject to the Governor's order about limiting gatherings to ten people and the DPH advisory to stay home. If an open house is held, the number of people in the home should be limited to 10 at a time and social distancing should be enforced.
- Are homeowners in the middle of buying a house still allowed to conduct house showings? **YES, if necessary and if social distancing can be practiced.**

- Are property management firms and landlords considered essential? **YES**
- Are recycling facilities an essential service? **YES**
- Are workers for nonprofits serving elderly communities essential? **YES**
- Are banks considered essential? **YES**
- I am a funeral home owner, is my entire business or only the moratorium aspects my business expected to stay open? **You are not required to stay open, but you are allowed to operate with social distancing and abiding by the Governor's order of gatherings of no more than 10 people.**
- What if my business sells marijuana for both medicinal and recreational use? Am I essential?
 - Please see the Cannabis Control Commission's [guidance](https://mass-cannabis-control.com/covid19/) (<https://mass-cannabis-control.com/covid19/>)
- Are parks, hiking trails, wildlife sanctuaries allowed to stay open if they enforce proper social distancing measures? **YES**
- Are RV parks essential? **YES**
- Are campgrounds and RV parks allowed to stay open if people live there year-round?
 - People who live in campgrounds or RV parks may continue living there, provided they follow social distancing and the stay at home advisory
- Are tennis courts allowed to stay open if people maintain social distancing?
 - The Governor's order prohibiting assemblages of more than 10 people applies to all athletic events. Athletic activities that bring participants into close, physical contact, whether they are conducted indoors or outdoors, are prohibited even when involving 10 or fewer people

Critical Manufacturing

- What types of Manufacturing are considered critical or are included under this? **SEE LIST**
 - Manufacturing is referenced under the Health Care / Public Health, Law Enforcement, Food and Agriculture, Energy, Transportation and Logistics, Communications and Information Technology, Other Community-, Education- or Government-Based Operations and Essential Functions, Critical Manufacturing, Chemical, Defense Industrial Base, and Hygiene Products and Services sections of the list – please consult each section
- Are there specific types of equipment or products that are deemed as essential? **SEE LIST**
 - Manufacturing is referenced under the Health Care / Public Health, Law Enforcement, Food and Agriculture, Energy, Transportation and Logistics, Communications and Information Technology, Other Community-, Education-, or Government-Based Operations and Essential Functions, Critical Manufacturing, Chemical, Defense Industrial Base, and Hygiene Products and Services sections of the list – please consult each section
- Is the manufacturing of medical marijuana deemed essential? **YES**
 - Please see the Cannabis Control Commission's [guidance](https://mass-cannabis-control.com/covid19/) (<https://mass-cannabis-control.com/covid19/>)
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Hazardous Materials

- Is tree and snow removal considered a hazardous job? **NO but workers who support storm clean-up operations are essential.**

Financial Services

- Who is considered essential under financial services? **SEE LIST**

Chemical

- If swimming pools are closed, are companies who provide sanitation services still allowed to stay open? **NO only the sanitation services included on the list are essential**

Defense Industrial Base

To come

Commercial Facilities

To come

Residential/Shelter Facilities and Services

- Are hotels and other lodging places considered essential? **YES, under certain circumstances.**
 - Please see lodging guidance [here \(/doc/march-31-2020-hotel-motel-guidance\)](/doc/march-31-2020-hotel-motel-guidance)

Hygiene Products and Services

- What types of businesses are included under the janitorial/cleaning services? What about independent workers?
SEE LIST
 - Based on the list, the following cleaning services under Healthcare/Public Health; Food and Agriculture; Transportation and Logistics; Construction-Related Activities; IT; Hazardous Materials; Chemical are considered essential.

Construction-Related Activities

- Is construction work considered essential? **IT DEPENDS.** Construction generally is allowed to continue if it is essential infrastructure or is related to essential products, services and supply chain in COVID-19 relief efforts. Work may also proceed if it is needed for the operation or maintenance of an existing building, is expressly permitted within the exemption for a specific essential industry, or involves the production of new housing units. See the list for more specific guidance. All construction sites should incorporate protocols to ensure safe social distancing of workers.
- Are we including all inspection services (e.g. fire systems, home code inspections etc. as essential?) **YES**
- Can businesses that don't operate out of a bricks-and-mortar location continue to operate? **YES with social distancing.**
 - If the service a business provides is not on the essential services list, that business must cease all in-person activities at its bricks-and-mortar facilities. These non-essential businesses are encouraged to work remotely. Businesses that do work remotely, whether as part of their normal activities or as a result of this order, must maintain social distancing requirements: six feet of separation between all employees, and between employees and members of the public.
- Is landscaping an essential service? **YES if providing services that are necessary to maintaining the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences, businesses and certain other buildings (see list for full details)**
- Is non-emergency tree removal considered an essential service? **NO but you may be able to continue operating (see below).**
 - If the service a business provides is not on the essential services list, that business must cease all in-person activities at its bricks-and-mortar facilities. These non-essential businesses are encouraged to work remotely. Businesses that do work remotely, whether as part of their normal activities or as a result of this order, must maintain social distancing requirements: six feet of separation between all employees, and between employees and members of the public.
- Are municipal public works employees covered under public works? **YES**
- Are electrical contractors essential? **YES**
- Can construction on public housing still continue? **YES**
- Are public works contractors still allowed to operate for emergency calls? **YES**
- Is pest control considered essential? **YES**
- Are all plumbers covered? **YES**
- Is there a COVID19 safe job site protocols for construction workers? **State construction safety protocols can be found [here](/info-details/covid-19-employee-health-protection-guidance-and-prevention) (/info-details/covid-19-employee-health-protection-guidance-and-prevention); all construction sites are urged to follow these guidelines.**

Distribution of Goods in Ecommerce and Distribution Centers

The current list of essential services includes:

Workers supporting ecommerce through distribution, warehouse, call center facilities, and other essential operational support functions.

- **What does “ecommerce” mean in the context of the essential services list?**
 - Although ecommerce in other contexts can refer broadly to any commercial transaction conducted electronically on the Internet, for purposes of the Essential Services Order, ecommerce means telephone, internet, or other electronic transactions that result in (1) the shipping of goods and products that themselves would qualify a seller as providing a COVID-19 Essential Service if the seller offered the products through other means and these were the only products the seller offered; or (2) or the shipping of goods and products that are necessary for other COVID-19 Essential Services providers to conduct their essential work; or (3) the shipping of goods and products from a warehouse or distribution center that includes within its normal inventory goods covered in (1). This reflects the intention of the Order to substantially limit the number of workplaces open during the state of emergency in order to reduce out-of-home activity and transmission of the virus.
 - Based on this rule, operations that offer only products such as furniture, most clothing for consumer purchase, cosmetics, jewelry, recreational equipment, or other consumer specialty items are not COVID-19 Essential Services. These operations are required to close their bricks-and-mortar locations in Massachusetts and may not remain open in order to conduct e-commerce.
- **I am a retailer with a bricks and mortar location, but I also sell products on-line. May I continue to sell products on-line while my store is closed?**
 - It depends. Individual business owners are permitted to enter into brick and mortar locations to perform necessary operations including shipping packages from the store. While this order is in effect, employees should not be permitted or required to enter bricks and mortar retail locations to prepare products for shipment or for any other reason. Workers may enter into distribution and warehouse facilities only to support the kinds of ecommerce described above.
- **Can all distribution centers, warehouse, and call centers continue to operate?**
 - No. Distribution centers, warehouses, and call centers can continue operate only if they support the types of ecommerce described above.

Other

- What types of shops are allowed to stay open?
 - Convenience Stores – **YES**
 - Office supply or electronics stores? **YES if selling hardware, home appliances or other essentials.**
 - Other Shops (e.g. Smoke shops, Flower shops, Book shops) – **NO**
- Hardware stores are allowed to stay open, does that include repair shops? Stores that also do repairs for appliances? **YES**

- Do casket manufacturer for funerals count as essential as well? **YES**
- Are golf courses considered essential? **NO**
- Are stores that could potentially sell essential items (e.g. a craft store that sells masks, gloves) allowed to stay open? **Only if the essential items are the primary goods sold at the store.**
- Are movers—moving people into new homes—classified as essential? **YES**
- Can retail stores do curbside pick-up? **NO**
- Are car washes essential? **NO**

General Questions – Stay-at-home Advisory Related

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Did you find what you were looking for on this webpage?

☐ Yes ☐ No

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